

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 OES-07 SP-02
SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-10 FEA-01 CEQ-01 EPA-04
NSF-02 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /109 W
-----126019 290247Z /72

O 282257Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4281

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

ALL OTHER AMCONSULS IN CANADA (POUCH)

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 06838

PASS WHITE HOUSE/SCHLESINGER AND GOLDMAN, FEA AND FPC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, PGOV, SENV, CA

SUBJECT: INTERIM REPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PANEL STUDYING ALCAN PIPELINE PROJECT

1. SUMMARY: ENVIRONMENT CANADA ASSESSMENT PANEL, CHAIRED BY DR. H. M. HILL, RELEASED JULY 28 INTERIM STUDY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED ALASKA HIGHWAY (ALCAN) PIPELINE. ON THE BASIS OF STUDY, PANEL CONCLUDED:

A. PIPELINE PROPOSED BY FOOTHILLS PIPE LINES (YUKON) LTD. CAN BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPERATED IN ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE MANNER SUBJECT TO CERTAIN CONDITIONS.

B. ALTERNATIVE KLONDIKE ROUTE (DAWSON DIVERSION) GENERALLY FOLLOWING SIXTY-MILE HIGHWAY TO DAWSON AND THEN KLONDIKE HIGHWAY TO WHITEHORSE IS POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ENVIRONMENTALLY FOR CONSTRUCTION OF GAS PIPELINE. PANEL UNCLASSIFIED

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FURTHER CONCLUDES THIS ROUTE MAY AVOID MANY OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH WESTERN SECTION (FIRST 150 MILES) OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY ROUTE.

C. THERE IS AN INSUFFICIENT ENVIRONMENTAL DATA BASE FOR CONSIDERATION OF LATERAL LINE FOLLOWING DEMPSTER HIGHWAY TO MACKENZIE DELTA AND, FURTHER, AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESS-

MENT OF DEMPSTER HIGHWAY ITSELF SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT
BEFORE CONSIDERATION OF PIPELINE ALONG THAT ROUTE.
END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ARE PANEL'S GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

A. PANEL IDENTIFIED SEVERAL POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS RELATED TO CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION
OF PROPOSED PIPELINE ALONG ALASKA HIGHWAY. PANEL CONCLUDES,
HOWEVER, THAT PROPOSED PIPELINE CAN BE CONSTRUCTED AND
OPERATED IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE MANNER SUBJECT
TO FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

-- THAT ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IS PROPERLY CARRIED OUT,

-- THAT SUITABLE RE-ROUTING OR OTHER SOLUTIONS BE FOUND
FOR UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE PROBLEM AREAS AND,

-- THAT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ICE-RICH
PERMAFROST AREAS BE OVERCOME THROUGH RE-ROUTING, EFFECTIVE
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADEQUATE MITIGATIVE MEASURES.

PANEL NOTES THAT ELEVATED LINE, NOT ADDRESSED AT HEARINGS, MIGHT
PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE TO BURYING PIPELINE IN ICE-RICH
PERMAFROST AREAS.

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B. IN ADDITION TO ALASKA HIGHWAY CORRIDOR, PANEL CONSIDERS
CORRIDOR FOLLOWING GENERALLY ALONG 60-MILE HIGHWAY FROM
YUKON-ALASKA BORDER TO DAWSON, ALONG KLONDIKE HIGHWAY TO
WHITEHORSE, THEN ALONG ALASKA HIGHWAY TO YUKON-BRITISH
COLUMBIA BORDER NEAR WATSON LAKE TO BE POTENTIALLY
ACCEPTABLE.

C. PANEL NOTES THAT POSSIBLE TINTINA TRENCH ROUTES
DISCUSSED AT HEARINGS WOULD TRAVERSE AREAS PRESENTLY
INACCESSIBLE BY ROAD AND WOULD CONSTITUTE UNNECESSARY
INTRUSION INTO WILDERNESS AREAS. PANEL DOES NOT RULE OUT
POSSIBILITY OF UTILIZING CORRIDOR FOLLOWING ABOVE
ALTERNATIVE TO CARMACKS THEN ROBERT CAMPBELL HIGHWAY TO
YUKON-BRITISH COLUMBIA BORDER.

D. PANEL NOTES ROUTES THROUGH DAWSON WOULD AVOID
SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF ICE-RICH PERMAFROST AND WOULD ALSO
AVOID THOSE UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE PROBLEM AREAS ASSOCIATED
WITH THE WESTERN SECTION OF THE PROPOSED ALASKA HIGHWAY
ROUTE (INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL PROGRAM SITES, SHEEP
MOUNTAIN, IBEX PASS, MT. MICHIE SQUANGA LAKE AND PICKHANDLE
LAKE).

E. PANEL CONSIDERS IT UNLIKELY ALL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR ALTERNATE CORRIDORS DESCRIBED ABOVE, AND CONCLUDES THEY WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER STUDY TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR ACCEPTABILITY.

F. PANEL CONCLUDES ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION BASE FOR DEMPSTER LINK IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO OFFER ANY OPINION ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACCEPTABILITY AT THIS TIME, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF DEMPSTER HIGHWAY ITSELF MUST BE DETERMINED AS A PREREQUISITE TO DEVELOPING

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AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR POSSIBLE PIPELINE.

PANEL CONCLUDES SOUTHERN YUKON PIPELINE ROUTE IS ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE TO MACKENZIE VALLEY ROUTE FOR TRANSPORTING ALASKA GAS SOUTH.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS: SHOULD DECISION BE MADE TO CONTINUE PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION OF ALASKA GAS SOUTH THROUGH SOUTHERN YUKON, PANEL RECOMMENDS:

A. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR PROPOSED SOUTHERN YUKON ROUTE BE COMPLETED BASED UPON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT GUIDELINES TO BE ISSUED BY PANEL.

B. AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MECHANISM BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY TO COORDINATE DESIGN CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT,

DESIGN CONCEPT APPROVALS, FINAL DESIGN APPROVALS AND
MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE.

C. AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND
OPERATION OF DEMPSTER HIGHWAY BE UNDERTAKEN IMMEDIATELY.
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D. COOPERATIVE INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT BASELINE DATA PROGRAM
SPECIFICALLY PERTINENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
OF THE PIPELINE, INCLUDING ITS EFFECT ON FISH AND WILDLIFE
RESOURCE UTILIZATION, BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY. RESEARCH
INTO FROST HEAVE AND THAW SETTLEMENT PROBLEMS SHOULD ALSO
BE CARRIED OUT ON COOPERATIVE BASIS.

E. WHERE ADVANCED PLANNING IS REQUIRED FOR THE RE-
ESTABLISHMENT OR RELOCATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES SUCH AS
HIGHWAYS, RECREATIONAL AREAS AND CAMPGROUNDS AFFECTED BY
THE PROPOSED PIPELINE, THIS PLANNING COMMENCE IMMEDIATELY.

4. CLASSIFIED COMMENT FOLLOWS SEPTEL. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ENVIRONMENT, REPORTS, PETROLEUM PIPELINES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977OTTAWA06838
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770271-0950
Format: TEL
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977079/aaaaahln.tel
Line Count: 196
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 48cfb370-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1959608
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTERIM REPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PANEL STUDYING ALCAN PIPELINE PROJECT
TAGS: ENRG, PGOV, SENV, CA, ALCAN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/48cfb370-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009